

## CST-SA 3rd New Voices Symposium

Cereal Science & Technology - Southern Africa hosted its 3rd biennial New Voices Symposium on 11 September 2019. The main purpose of New Voices Symposium is to give MSc and PhD students studying cereal science the opportunity to present papers at a national level. CST-SA presented two awards at this event – for the best PhD presentation and for the best MSc presentation. A record number of 28 students presented their research to study leaders and peers. CST-SA Chair, Mariana Purnell (also General Manager of Agbiz Grain), announced the winners at the end of the one-day symposium:

Best PhD presentation: Ms. Lisa A. Rothmann, University of the Free State. Research title: “A quantitative summary and spatial hierarchy characterisation of white mold prevalence in South Africa from a decade of observations.”

Lisa’s doctorate in Plant Pathology focuses on applied and computational epidemiological research in order to generate regional risk models for Sclerotinia disease onset in South Africa. Her studies involve field trials, disease monitoring and measuring, as well as data science. She is an advocate of open and reproducible research and a junior leader at Open Plant Pathology.

Best MSc presentation: Ms. Ayesha Shaikh, University of Stellenbosch. Research title: “Fumonisin deposition by *Fusarium verticillioides* depends on timing and progress of fungal infection.”

Ayesha is focusing on *Fusarium verticillioides*, a fungus commonly associated with maize which also produces harmful toxins called fumonisins that have noxious effects on both humans and livestock, once ingested. Her work aims to gain a better understanding of the infection cycle and toxin production, including masked fumonisins, of this fungus by identifying physico-chemical changes, during kernel maturation.

The sponsors of the New Voices Symposium were FoodBev SETA, Sensako, Corteva and Agri-Enviro Solutions. In addition, all the bursary students were sponsored by their bursars so that they could attend the Meet & Greet as well as the symposium.

The study leaders of all students involved with grain and oilseeds research should become members of CST-SA and attend this event in order to benchmark their students with others that are concluding their studies. Academia should also make the most of the opportunities for bursaries that are being offered by the Agri SETA and the FoodBev SETA. At this event, FoodBev SETA announced that in 2017/2018 it spent R245 million on 2 412 MSc and PhD student bursaries. For the current year (until end of March 2020) there are still funds available to students wishing to study in agriculture and food science, before the next funding cycle commences.